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THE PANEL OF WRITERS

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Miss O'Connor published a story in the Arts Forum issue of *Coraddi* in 1947, when she was a student at the State University of Iowa. Since that time, she has earned a fine reputation with stories published in periodicals and with her novel *Wise Blood*. This spring Harcourt, Brace will release Miss O'Connor's latest novel *A Good Man Is Hard To Find*.

PETER TAYLOR

Formerly a teacher of writing at Woman's College, now at Kenyon College, Mr. Taylor is one of the half dozen most important writers of prose fiction currently publishing in America. *The Widows of Thornton* is his most recent book.

ROBIE MACAULEY

Mr. Macauley has also taught in the writing program at Woman's College, as well as at Bard, Iowa, and Kenyon. He is critic, short story writer, and author of *Disguises of Love*, a novel published by Random House. Mr. Macauley now lives in Alexandria, Virginia.

RANDALL JARRELL

A poet first, an important critic, and the author of one full length piece of prose fiction, *Pictures from an Institution*, Mr. Jarrell teaches in the English Department at Woman's College. His *Selected Poems* has just been published by Alfred A. Knopf, and his famous *Poetry and the Age* has recently been re-issued as a Vintage Book.

the woman's college of the university of north carolina
greensboro, north carolina

CORADDI

SPRING 1955

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CORADDI, student literary magazine of the Woman's College, contains in this issue the material chosen by the student-faculty Writing Program Committee for discussion at the Writing Forum of the Twelfth Annual Festival of the Arts, March 29 and 30. The undergraduate work presented here will be discussed at the Student Panel Discussion, the afternoon of March 29, and by the Guest Writers Panel, the morning of March 30. Conferences for individual criticisms of students' work are scheduled during the two days with the visiting critics, Mr. Robie Macauley, Miss Flannery O'Connor, and Mr. Peter Taylor, and with Woman's College resident writer, Mr. Randall Jarrell.

WRITING PROGRAM COMMITTEE: Mary Wells Edwards, Debora Marcus, Suzanne Rodgers, student chairman; Professors Marc Friedlaender, Leonard Hurley, Randall Jarrell, Jane Summerell, Robert Watson, and Robert Humphrey, faculty chairman.

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Yellow In Shadow

MELVYN BARON

My uncle Abraham was a rude-looking man with dark red hair, a frail frame and round shoulders and a chin that was pointed in toward his chest. My father would tell everyone that Abraham was searching for money, looking downward like that. Everyone would laugh because Abraham was my mother's brother, our poorest relative whose wife had left him early in marriage to marry a salesman. I could always tell when my father was preparing to talk about Abraham. He would mumble first, regretting his thought, and then march over to the liquor cabinet where he kept a large photograph rolled up and kept tight by three thick rubber bands, the type that I always found so hard to bust. He would call to my mother for a bag of peanuts and to me to come and bring with me four books to hold down the edges of the photograph. He would speak loudly but reverently about the four men arm in arm in the picture whose honor and goodness shone as ever through the yellowing print. My mother would give him the peanuts and hush him for being too proud, since he too was in the picture, second from the right, wearing a brilliant straw hat and holding in his right hand a wonderful pipe that was just visible under Uncle Louis' shoulder. Then my father would frown inevitably and my mother, her arms crossed under her breasts, would face him feebly, sensing the name of my uncle Abraham on his lips.

"Your brother," he would say, "is a foolish, foolish man, Esther." Having said this his nose would twitch a little and he might run his hands through his hair, parting it in the middle. She would try to protect her brother's name. My father could always sense her reproach yet he knew that she did not love her brother any more, and was content at that.

Looking down at the picture, my mother could never help admiring these men. But she was always obliged to remark that all of them had not always been successful, and that it was a misfortune that her own brother was lazy. And she could never understand it, since her father was a dealer in piece goods, and had made a fortune and was known all over the Eastern half of the United States, from Boston to Philadelphia.

"For the sake of Abey, for the sake of Abey," she would say, "for his sake alone—I know that you don't like him, Herman, but you all were poor sometimes . . ." Occasionally she would grow indignant and command pity for her poor brother, who, God knows, might have been a real bum, and not just a failure. Most of the time when my father generated the topic of my uncle Abraham on the floor of our house, with the beaming faces of four successful men

shining upward with the exciting glimpse of what my father called his prosperous youth, my mother found no other outlet but to compete with him and use her father as an example of a similar type of nobility. When they argued they smiled at each other and made ugly references to countless relations.

"You don't know nothing," my father would say eventually, upsetting my mother no end, so much so that she would rush out of the room and into the kitchen.

Early in the spring of the year that I started in high school I was very excited about the ensuing marriage of my cousin Irwin, whose fiance I had secretly admired for over a year. She was twenty-four, a school teacher and a stunning woman. Irwin was my uncle Louis' boy, a medical student. When I thought and thought about that school teacher and about Irwin, I decided that I should have been Uncle Louis' son and much older too, so that I, instead of Irwin, might have gotten her.

I saw my father's hat and coat thrown on a chair one afternoon as I was coming in from school and I thought immediately that something had happened about the wedding. It was not far off, and my mother did not stop talking about it to my father and to her friends. There were to be two hundred guests at the ceremony and reception and a series of parties before the wedding, one of which was being given at our house. I planned more than once to steal the bride away before the wedding, and now I was hoping that she had thrown off Irwin on her own to save me the trouble of making a horrible scene at the party. But I liked Irwin, and chided myself guiltily. And I thought of how very silly I would look but, too, how very old I would seem.

The house was silent and the clocks were noisy. I imagined that they were upstairs, talking about it, whatever it was. I tried yawning very loudly and then waited for the response. Then I slammed my books down on the hall-table and stamped into kitchen, opened the refrigerator, closed it not gently and opened the faucet, letting the water run aimlessly down the drain. These affects achieved, I sat down and waited. Then I began to grow frightened.

I was an impetuous, yet fearful boy. The house was large and provided much ground for the restless hours of a boy, yet its warmth was carefully closeted in the almost congenial ornaments and fixtures that they had collected over the years. They had given me what they, at my age, did not have. My room was filled with small things, freshly painted boats and airplanes and electric trains and many, many books.

Perhaps it was the silence that made me horribly

afraid. Our family were grand talkers. We had, in the old country, an ancestor who was a great lawyer and practiced, to my father's delight, without having studied the law. The silence . . . From my place in the kitchen I soon heard my mother's footsteps. I rose awkwardly from my place when I heard them. I could do nothing but conceal my delight and relief and rushed by her on the stairs, careful not to touch her, and into my room where I fell on my bed and lost my breath with my face in my pillow.

I listened soon for that silence that had been so compelling and awesome. It was gone for good and I could now hear my father returning downstairs, and calling after my mother who had preceded him. I thought they had argued and I listened intently for their usual ceremonial of reconciliation. I listened to my radio programs until dinner time.

"What was the matter with you before," my mother asked at the dinner table. "You know you acted so strange. Did you get a bad mark today. Did you?"

"No," I answered after a while. I sat up straight and fingered my knife and fork and looked down again.

"You shouldn't ask the child that way, Esther," my father said. He passed me my mother's jam benevolently. He talked to her so curtly that I was uncomfortable. I found out from their talk that Uncle Abraham was the cause of my father's abandonment of his business for the afternoon. But my thoughts drifted away. I needed an excuse for my rudeness on the stairs.

"I'm sorry, Mama . . . I was going to listen to my programs." I was brave enough to keep my head up and face them both. It was strange, and I was unnerved, for I could not feel anything but a fierce impulse to run away.

"Irwin Lewis won't like him, I'm telling you, Esther, and you know I don't mind except that the wedding and Celia and that shipper I told you about—you know that Irwin some day will have to have clientele—and a big man like Mr. Kline—your brother's not good with these people—most of them don't know you have a brother—what can I say to tell you—he's no good, no good—for us and Irwin and he's no good for himself—what can he do for us, what, what?"

My father rose from the table and scratched his head before my mother could say a word. I could tell that she was cursing under her breath and that he knew but was keeping silent. He sat down again.

My father was a large man. His hair was greying. I suddenly felt at home all over again and desired frantically that my mother and father resolve the problem of my uncle Abraham and that we should spend the evening together as usual, as always, that my foolish feelings would evaporate and I would forget about Irwin and the school teacher and my fears and the incident on the stairs. My father finally conceded his point and agreed to have Uncle Abraham to their

reception for Irwin and his bride. I was elated.

Our house could not have been in a more disorderly state that evening as my mother and father silently and methodically went about changing things about to suit their tastes or the tastes of people like Mr. Kline who would be at the party for Irwin, or Mr. Lewis, who had a quarter of a million once and now was well-to-do but lived still on the memory of what he had had, or the Beadel's, who had a boat, whose daughter someday would outgrow her braces and marry me. They worked together in the most beautiful way imaginable. The moments of chaos were few, for the furnishings we owned were easily removed to other, less obtrusive places if they would not fit in easily with the type of crowd that were to appear at the reception. The touching portrait of a large brown dog with black ears was removed from a living-room wall and my mother hung in its place three Japanese prints all the way from San Francisco.

I went out early in the evening on an errand for my mother, which irritated me no end, but when I came in I could feel the warmth of their movements and it summoned me to them. They were sitting in the living-room and my father was beaming profoundly. I could hardly see my mother at all, so close to him was she seated, so totally dominated by his mood. But I did see that her hair was in her eyes, and she could have been laughing or crying before I came in, for all that I knew about this sudden jubilation. Then I realized that the object of their attentions was the huge photograph of the four men, on the wall opposite, in a white pine frame. The men in the picture seemed to be laughing down at us then.

"Did you buy the cheese, darling?" my mother asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Well put it away now, my baby," she said, "and come in here and sit with mamma and pappa and see what we've done—you remember now you behave when we have the party on Sunday—you know what this party means to pappa and me and I hope that you'll like that little girl, you know Mrs. Lieb's little girl, you know the one—you won't bother the older people, no?"

We spent the evening watching the television shows and I was happy. I watched my father each time his eyes wandered away and set upon the picture, how shadowy and intangible.

"You know, Esther," he said, "we got to get a picture light for it. I think we do."

The outer world was a strange and uninteresting place to my family. They spoke of the events in the newspaper as if those were the things that other people did, as if that world of ours had achieved an almost mystical alienation from the world outside. When my uncle Abraham was mentioned briefly once in the New York Times as one of the assistants on a rock expedition in the Rocky Mountains, they commented tersely about the inanimation of rocks and that Abraham was growing farther and farther from

being a human being because of it.

I spent an hour, an uncomfortable one, with Uncle Abraham on the eve of the wedding day. It was a night that I had desperately wanted to spend with my mother and my father. My mother kissed me briefly before she went out with my father. They had to spend a few hours with Mr. and Mrs. Kalin, who were going to take a trip to visit their son Albert who was going to college in California for he had won a scholarship and was going to be in a swimming contest with people from Hollywood and all over Los Angeles watching. Mr. Kalin had a sister in Los Angeles, so they had a place to stay. My father was going to try to convince them to take the plane instead of the train because it was the best way nowadays and it really is as safe as they say but Mrs. Kalin was petrified of trains as well. They left for the Kalins' at seven and told me to go to bed at ten for I would have a hard day the next day and they would expect me to help set things up finally when the time came for the guests. My father and mother called the guests 'them,' and the house with themselves as part of it they referred to as 'we.'

Before Uncle Abraham came I watched the room where the party was to take place and I was cornered almost by the very thought of them, those bubbling faces which would fill the room and fill my father's and my mother's hearts with remembrances for months to come. I was in a trance before the picture of my father and his brothers. That the picture was yellow held most of my attention. The rich and living faces behind the yellow were real enough but there was something strange about the smiles on their faces, as if a ghoul was lurking behind them, poking them, taunting them and then making them smile for a fellow ghoul who had finally, after much indignation, snapped the picture. The lights were all ablaze after my mother and my father left for the Kalins'. For some reason, I shut out all the lights, except the one that my father had just placed above the large yellow photograph on the wall. I sat on the sofa staring at it, wondering whether that could really be my father, whether those men, whose hearts had been open to the happiness of youth as my mother kept telling me that I should, whether they had smiled because they wanted to. It plagued me. It set me thinking in a way that sent fears throughout my small body and my small brain.

Uncle Abraham came in at the moment that I wanted to rush forward and switch off the light so as to warm myself in the darkness. He smiled when I opened the door and I wanted sorely to look around for I felt my father's presence in the house behind me. Uncle Abraham had on a black coat and was wearing no hat. He took both my hands and shook them warmly and came in and spoke about phoning my mother during the day and speaking to her about coming over and how upset she was that she was going out and how she invited him to come over and see me and I wondered then about my father and couldn't

keep my father out of my mind then, for I could see him staring at Uncle Abraham and leering from the picture from a life that Uncle Abraham had never had, and I looked at Uncle Abraham's hair, for he was balding in the center of his head and I couldn't tell at all whether he was older or younger than my father, but I knew then that he was older than my mother.

He came into the room where the picture was hung. We sat together and all I could think of was rocks, plain and simple, and he spoke of them. His job was a modest one; he hadn't gone to college but he was the assistant to some men who had and they had studied rocks in school while he had found out about them on his own. We sat together for a while, I listening for the most part.

"You should learn more about rocks," he said, "now, when you're a boy because when you're older you won't want to, you won't have the time to."

"I have trains and other things that I like," I said. "Rocks are silly Pappa says." I would not look at him after I said this for he knew what my father thought anyway. I was sorry.

"Don't boys always collect things?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"I did."

"I don't." I was sorry for I could say no more. I said other things about Irwin and the schoolteacher and I asked him whether he would be at the party, but for the most part I was silent and listened to him. I was beginning to be grateful that he had come when he started to leave. I asked him to stay, but he seemed to flounder in finding an excuse to stay. I saw him very little and when I did see him I was at a loss for words, and I could not imagine being any other way with him, but I was always happy to see him, as if I was finding out that he was still alive. He left, promising to speak to me at the party the next day. Ten minutes after he left and I was climbing the stairs to go to bed, I heard my father at the door and I knew why Uncle Abraham had left.

I was up half the night thinking very hard about what I would do at the party the following day. I thought most of all about the schoolteacher, her beautiful maturity enchanted me. What she knew was always more or less everything. When Irwin would bring her over, I would grow talkative, and I would compete with Irwin for her attentions. I would always win for Irwin usually went off and talked with my father about the dullest subjects imaginable. I noticed that Irwin was about to leave every time that he came to our house with the schoolteacher when a cool expression came over his face. He yawned unwillingly which disturbed my father who always kept the strictest attentions to others in company and expected the same in return. But I was sorry to see the schoolteacher go and I watched her closely as she took Irwin's arm and they left. Her name was Susan and she had long hair. I had been sorry to hear one

time that they were not going to live near us after they married.

I got up and looked at the clock guiltily several times and before I fell asleep I thought of Uncle Abraham. I just knew that my father was not pleased at the prospect of having him among our friends. Why he just wouldn't find much to talk about with all those people who traveled and went to Miami Beach for at least four weeks, if not eight, during the worst winters and whose sons and daughters were going to the best colleges and universities in the country. One was even going to go to England for a summer though his parents were afraid he might get sick from the climate. Uncle Abraham was not the sort of a man who went around much. I guess he did not have the money, or maybe he just did not care to, or maybe he just did not have the time. He had said to me that time was precious when you get older and I could not at all visualize my life being otherwise than it was. I feared not being able to roam around as I did at home. I feared the very word responsibility that my father threw about in his pronouncements to me and in those to my mother about Uncle Abraham.

Uncle Abraham rarely visited us and when he did he was very congenial and warm and talkative, even with my father. He even knew about my father's business and although my father thought that Abraham had high-falutin' ideas about business and things, I am sure that my father could have almost respected his opinion, the way he sat and listened carefully to every word. Surely the understanding between them was more real than one would expect. They even smiled at each other out of what could be respect if I did not already know that Father, in his more bitter moments, had torn to pieces the very core of Abraham's being. There had been something, which to me then was not at all clear, about both my father and Abraham having competed for something many years before, but it was not clear to me, and I wonderer how my father, who was so successful and so distant from anything which Abraham might want, could, in any way, compete with him. I had heard the word jealous from my mother in the midst of one of the ordinary talks my father started about Abraham. There was every reason to believe that Uncle Abraham was terribly jealous of my father. Life had treated my father well, given him a decent home and family and a decent income so that he could have fairly decent friends. I could not understand why, if it were feasible, that my father was, for some reason hidden in the past or perhaps lodged merely in their hearts, jealous of Abraham. Was it jealousy? I considered that impossible. My father was not jealous of anyone, except perhaps Mr. Kline whom he really admired. But what was lodged in my mind about my father's feeling for Uncle Abraham was in irrepressible anger, an anger which my father undertook to express in the most blatant way possible. My mother often felt consoled that my father was, most of the time, merely angry at Abraham's past mistakes with his life.

The two families, my mother's and Abraham's on the one hand and my father's on the other, had been brought up together. The bonds had been strong, they had derived from old country stock from the same district in Russia.

Before I fell asleep I thought hard about Susan. I saw her before me wearing a yellow dress with flowers on it and I could see her smile as she brushed back her hair with her fingers and I knew that she was warm like this for me alone, except, when Irwin was around and then she shone in a far-off way, as if she hated being anywhere without him and when she was with him she could face anyone with a smile but she smiled for me too, and I loved her for it. I fell asleep dreaming of her and of the party the next day when I would be the little boy of Herman and Esther, the little boy who was getting so old now. I remembered Mr. Beadel who was fat and Mrs. Kline who was fat and Irwin would yawn and my father and I would feel ashamed. I saw my father's angry face throughout.

I could feel my mother shaking me hurriedly and it did not take long for me to find out that it was morning and nine o'clock at that and that I had overslept. What shocked me back to consciousness most was the clothing that my mother was wearing and the mekeup she had on, so early in the morning too. She was wearing a dark blue dress that bulged in the rear and a necklace that made me blink. Her face and neck were powdered all over. But I found out that she was only trying on the dress and the necklace and that she would probably wear her new satin casual one, and I was relieved to hear that the powder would come off for she talked about finding time to take a bath and I wondered why she put the powder on in the first place. But, no matter, for she whisked out of the room and downstairs to talk to my father and I jumped from bed and dressed in a hurry. Once downstairs, my mother stuffed some cereal down my throat and told me to have a glass of milk while she went out to talk again to my father. He was not dressed yet and was acting rather casual about the whole thing. He understood these people well, knew what they wanted and he was ready to give it to them. By ten o'clock he was hurriedly sweeping the parlor and the living room with occasional glances at the yellow photograph which, to my mother's dismay, he insisted on keeping in the most predominant position in the room. My mother at one point ignored him and took it down. When he returned from the kitchen where he intermittently took some toast and cheese and chewed on it while he was setting things in order, he put it up again. They argued momentarily about it and it remained up, my mother too completely involved in the problem of her bath to really worry about the strangely uncontinental flavor of the photograph among the other, latest things in modern design. The Japanese prints remained on the wall across, completing an almost grotesque conflict of motives which the guests were sure to notice. My mother even noticed that, but said it only once.

By eleven my mother was in the bath and my father was decked out in his finest, a grey striped suit with a black and maroon tie. His grey hair shone. It was at that time that my uncle Abraham came by to lend a hand in the preparation for the party. My father gave him a token greeting, as if his early appearance on the scene was to be expected. I was in the parlor dusting glasses and my father and Abraham sat down in the living room. My father sat down quickly on the sofa, his head erect and proud in the presence of a man who was always looking down. Abraham sat opposite the sofa looking down at the rug.

"Well, another one we're losing," Abraham said.

"Yes, yes," my father answered quickly, "and she is a beautiful one."

"I was waiting for that boy to get around to getting married."

"Well, he picked a good one," my father said. "He's a smart boy. I don't think you know her family. They're publishing people. I know a friend of the father. They have a summer place in Canada."

"Oh, yes," my uncle answered. "I have heard something, Herman." He raised his head slowly and opened his eyes. "That is a fine suit Herman. Yes, Herman, you are doing well. I guess you always have."

"I heard that you were here last night and saw my boy. Esther never tells me these things."

Abraham lifted his left arm and rested it awkwardly on the back of his chair. "He is a fine boy, your son, I mean he is growing and handsome." Then Abraham lapsed into silence. I kept wiping the rim of one glass over and over again and I could see them both through the window door that separated the parlor from the living room. I heard the water running in the bath and my mother's placid sighs. She took long baths and loved them.

I turned away from the door to the living room and went to sit for a while by the parlor window. Mr. Lorman was throwing a football at his son who couldn't catch very well. I laughed at him. There was a strong breeze that proved that spring had not yet arrived. The sky was a fresh blue without a cloud in sight. The perfect day for the wedding. I had seen weddings before and I was not particularly excited except for the fact that it was Susan and Irwin. Susan . . . I took great interest in a large dog in the street. He was running along smoothly without any apparent destination. Across from our house were a series of new homes with people in them that my mother had not yet met. New neighbors are always aloof at the start but eventually they get caught up in the stream of things, as we did, and as they grow to know the old-timers in the neighborhood like Mr. Kalin, who built his house there almost thirty years before, they learn to live with the idea that people are more alike than different, and that neighbors should at least try to like each other. Of course, there were the usual feuding groups on our block. Those who undertook to mend the feuds usually intensified them and included themselves on one side or another.

My father called grudges healthy if they do not become violent. For the most part, the street lived in peace, and my father and mother never stopped to understand many of the neighbors' resentment of us, chiefly because they reveled in the fact that the resentment stemmed from jealousy of my father's income, which was considerable for those times, though the house did not show it except on occasions.

I heard my father's voice through the door and it was sterner than it had been before. I thought immediately that Uncle Abraham had stirred up my father's anger. I started to have fears which I knew my mother would have if she were downstairs. I stepped softly toward the glass-door and out of the corner of my eye, I watched them and listened to them. My father was standing up, his imprint still on the sofa and he was pointing at the yellow print. Uncle Abraham was still seated, but he was twisted about in his seat, looking back and forth between my father's imposing finger and the yellow print above his head. I could see him swallow hard as he made ready to speak and I saw my father's attentions rudely accompanying this gesture.

"I could admire you, Herman, but you are too proud. My sister knows that, she is your wife."

"How many years, Abe," my father said, "is it since your wife left you. O, God, and how many years am I married to Esther."

"O, Herman, I know you longer than that," Abraham said. "Don't you remember when we used to go out together. I used to get you nice girls."

"I know, I know, I know," my father said. He began pacing the floor.

"You always hated me for it," Abraham said. He turned away then.

My father did not answer but went on pacing. He mumbled the word failure a few times but then stopped and went to the yellowing picture. He touched it and then stepped back from it.

"Isn't it funny, Herman," my uncle said, "that it is always when a wedding comes that we remember such thoughts. Isn't it funny?"

"Yes, yes, we do look back to old times, and we remember before we were married, Abe, do you remember, Abe? Yes you do. You know enough to remind me that you got me girls. Yes, but what else can you look back at but for that, for what you did for me and what you did to me. Do you have anything really to remember?"

"I have my dreams," my uncle said. "My hopes before she left me. You know I had hopes for the future. You know I wanted children."

"Don't talk about her," my father said. "I hate you for it." He walked to the far side of the room and I was shaking then from fright.

"I thought she loved me, Herman, . . . all I could do. . . ." Then, Abraham rose and approached my father.

My father suddenly gained control of himself and returned to the picture on the wall. He shrugged his

shoulders and he sat down where Abraham had been sitting.

"You know," my father said, "you know that I have something to live for. Look, look. Look at me there, in the picture, look. I was happy, I was already successful. I'm not angry at you, I don't hate you. I have more than you ever had. I have them, my brothers and myself, a happy memory. We are all alive, Thank God. And tonight we marry off Louis' boy, a wonderful boy. And I am happy, I am."

"You're a smart man, Herman," my uncle said. "You know what you can have and keep it and you stay where you are."

"Do I, do I," my father said. "You sound like you're calling me lazy. You, who never had any ambition in you, ambition for the right things."

"What are the right ambitions, Herman. One time you had the same ambition that I did."

"You, you . . . you couldn't handle her, you didn't know her," my father said.

"Did you?"

"I had money, I always had money and you, you, you threw away your father's money, you did, and you expect her to stay with you, you stupid, you stupid."

"I knew, I knew, Herman," my uncle said, "I knew that you were angry. Poor Irwin, such a scene before his wedding."

"Do you think he'll know about it, you foolish," my father said and he rushed over to lie back on the sofa and the room was silent for a moment.

"You should be happy that you are the way you are Herman. You have Esther and the child, I don't complain, but I lost what I gave everything to get."

"You don't know, you know nothing, how I was cooped up in the beginning but God knows I love Esther, I do and the child. I don't hate you, but I can't think of you, when I do I remember. What I remember isn't on the picture on the wall."

"But you told me, just now, that you have everything you want. Your brothers, you have compensation. I don't complain, Herman, I am unhappy, but I have my own life. I don't travel much, I don't have much money, I don't give like you to the big charities, I can't. I don't want nothing but a little peace."

My father was wearied. He listened for my mother's footsteps but she was still in the bath and I was well out of sight, I was shivering with such fear that I broke a glass in my hands and cut my fingers. I was too frightened to move and I wrapped my hand in my handkerchief and waited to hear what they said next. I knew now that my father's anger was true and right. I was sorry for Abraham but I could not help being fearful at my father's anger. I did not, would not understand, but I felt helpless and lonely in my father's helplessness. I saw that he was even firm in his uneasiness. A woman without a face appeared before my eyes, dressed lavishly. It was she, the one they fought over and the one my father had

lost to him, the one my uncle Abraham had loved and married and lost and now there was nothing, only rocks and memories, and my father . . .

The yellowing photograph dominated the room. It sent out its moments and smiles in bleached signals to my father who frowned now even in its presence. I wanted to rush into the room and embrace him, to tell him how unhappy I was because he was unhappy, how I would love him with all my heart, how I would stay with him for the rest of my life. I did not understand the woman they had loved. It was an unholy presence that drove me to all the ugliest thoughts about my mother and about women in general. I saw my mother naked in the bath with her hands crossed and her eyes closed. She was frowning at me and smiling at my father at the same time.

In the living room, the sun was shining through the venetian blinds. It set an uneven pattern on the rug and made my father shut his eyes. Abraham was sitting at my father's desk, his head in his hands. My father was standing over him, trying to make him look up without touching him and without speaking. My father opened his eyes and walked away without looking back.

My father cleared his throat and turned to my uncle who was now standing at the desk. He looked into the sunlight and then looked down. They both stared at the rug, dumbly.

"I am stronger than you, Abe, I know. I have a life and I am happy, God knows I am, that, that on the wall it tells me I am happy. It tells me about my life, my good life with Esther and my life with my brothers, my happy, happy life. But when I look at it, sometimes I see you. You who are not even deserving to be in the picture, I see you. You are more yellow than the photograph. You are old, but you remind me of something. You don't live. For six years you lived. Then you died. But now I'm happy, I have one half, one part of my life. You have nothing. I go on living with my picture, you go on living with your rocks and your guilt. Good, good. I am happy. Today we make a party for another love, for Louis' boy. God Bless them. You are dead, you won't take her away from my nephew Irwin . . . I am glad."

When my father had finished, he turned away from my uncle Abraham who had tears in his eyes, tears of remorse. My father brushed off his coat and rested his head against the back of the sofa and stroked the arm of the sofa softly. My uncle Abraham came quickly to his senses and shook himself hastily. He was infinitely resigned. He almost could not feel the guilt then, poured out upon him by my father, so gentle was the look in his eyes. He looked at my father benevolently, as if he would kiss him. But he took his hand and smiled. I was in tears then, when they walked hand in hand toward the photograph on the wall. But my father shook loose from the grasp and stared down.

"It is a very happy, very happy day," my uncle

Abraham said and my father nodded. Then quickly I had to rush into the kitchen, for my uncle left the living-room and came into the parlor and called up to my mother that he was here and that he wanted to help out.

From noon to three o'clock the house was unusually silent except for my mother who gave orders to the three of us. I was reprimanded quietly for having cut my fingers and I knew that both my father and my uncle Abraham were wondering whether I had heard their talk. I could tell by the way they looked at me and spoke to me. But I was not unusually quiet for I gathered that they suspected something. But in reality, I was soon not as consciously disturbed as I thought I would be. I was visibly excited about the party at four and I waited anxiously for the appearance of Susan. Her smile could set things straight again. But the far away look in my father's eyes sent my mind racing back to that scene. I was nervous and my mother chided me for being too excited. She said that I was old enough now not to get so excited at such things, that Mrs. Beadel was going to bring her little girl, that I should act like a gentleman and be calm and cool.

My uncle Abraham set out the meat spreads and my father handled the liquors. Every light in the house was shining. Every corner was alive. A small envelope protruded from my father's coat pocket. It was our gift to Irwin and his bride. My father always prided himself on generous giving. The dreary living-room of before was as gay as the ballroom would be that night, where the wedding would take place. My mother lit candles for atmosphere, though the electric lights remained on.

When the guests started to arrive, there was no more work to be done. My mother had worn the dark blue dress after all and the necklace that made me blink, but I could not tell whether she had powdered her neck. They came in groups of four and five. First of all, with their children, came my father's brothers. The ladies rushed off to my mother's bedroom where they sat around and talked. My father's brothers came into the living room immediately. By a quarter past four, there were thirty people and I was jubilant. Mrs. Kline came unaccompanied, her husband, being out of touch with time, had arrived home late in the afternoon and would be over later. The whisky flowed. There were toasts. Both Irwin and Susan blushed heavily at the toasts. My father was glorious, my mother too busy to be anything but hostess and maid. The hum of the voices often became loud and buzzing. The world the house possessed was one of griefless complacency and infinite warmth. My uncle Abraham sat and talked with many people.

Mr. Morstine did not have his teeth, and excused himself from much talking. There was so much news to be gone over. The two young girls of Mrs. Hart were being pursued feverishly by two law students from Yale. Mr. uncle Oscar had a new patent approved and my father embraced him for it. All the

ladies eventually came into the room and liqueurs were poured. A lamp was broken and my father laughed spilling a little, very little, of his rye on the collar of his coat. The lamp was taken away. Irwin and Susan met everyone, individually and collectively. They met Mr. Pottslisch, the auctioneer, who had collected 4000 petite vases, and Mr. Stein, who was very, very old and drunk. Everyone was pleased with the couple, and Susan was ready to exhibit her charms to anyone who might be by. She smiled mostly, and gestured. Then Mr. Kalin, one of my father's closest friends beamed as he walked toward the photograph on the wall. The toasts for the loving couple having been ten times realized, he proposed a new toast. He gathered my father and his brothers to the center of the crowd. I looked about for uncle Abraham and it was at this moment that he was sitting with the bride, wrapped in conversation. The four brothers stood holding their glasses while Mr. Kalin proposed the toast.

"Both then and now," he cried, warmly reviewing the photograph, "long life, love and happiness for these four." The guests drank up. A few seconds later, my father turned white when he saw my uncle Abraham engaged in quiet conversation with the bride. He pulled himself together and turned back to Mr. Kalin who was raving about the virtues of success. But my father could not keep his eyes off the two of them, talking. He fled into the parlor where some gentlemen were inviting each other to spend the next winter in Florida. The air was cooler in there and I followed him and held tightly to his coat.

He did not notice me by his side when, for several minutes he talked flippantly with the men. I watched the bitterness rise. I remembered him saying that uncle Abraham was dead, when I was listening to their scene.

"Sick, Herman?" one of the men asked, for my father's face was as white as death. The noise from the larger room was penetrating. He did not answer the man but walked slowly back into the living-room. He seemed determined to do something, and I was frightened, so frightened that I pulled at him. He motioned for me to go away, but I stayed behind him as he walked.

In the living room a lady has spilled her drink on the rug and was all upset and apologized quickly to my mother, who shook off the apology with a laugh. I felt a piercing desire to hold Susan's hand. My mother stood talking with Mrs. Kalin. In three hours, Irwin and Susan would be married. The candles were grotesque and ineffective in the room blazing with electric lights.

I searched vainly for my uncle Abraham. He was gone. He had left quickly and I hoped, prayed that he would never return. I wanted to rush into my mother's arms, kiss my father on his cheeks. My father saw that Abraham was gone and the yellow picture loomed large in his eyes. Susan smiled as I

passed her and I was not frightened anymore. I said hello to Mrs. Beadel's little girl who blushed all over. The bell rang. I watched my father put his arm about my mother and lead her to the door to greet the new guests who had rung. He kissed her gently before they opened the door.

MICHELE MURRAY

Dumb Show

*"Unreal, give back to us what once you gave,
The Imagination that we spurned and crave."
—Wallace Stevens*

Lamplight wanders into the shadows
Giddily, leaving one pale patch of light
For Harlequin, entering the narrow street
As if a grave, decorated with fragments
Of colored glass, masquerading as jewels,
Glittering . . . A strange tomb, this street,
But necessary.

The first note of the guitar produces
A beginning. Nearby, a Spanish gentleman
In a cape stands twirling, twirling
A black, black cane. The visible villian
Who bows in despair before the invisible.
All, all here are frightened of darkness.

A pale serenade rises gently from beneath
Some secret tiny place of being alone.

Love awaken,
Come into the night,
The moon awaits you
With empty fingers
And will not go.

I have four oranges,
Fretted with juice,
For you. Oranges happy
Like a little moon.
Love, awaken.

Suddenly the lights come up, the moon
Discreetly retires behind a convenient cloud
As awakened swallows fly in sudden sprays
Away, away over the tiled rooftops.
Harlequin wipes away his empty face
And waits.

The flirt, perennial as laughter, appears,
In tulle and silk, wearing a flaunting domino,
Her head high but empty, her voice a squeak,
Wrenched from the invisible man, to pretend
At enchantment, be content with belief.
She appears, in silhouette.

Harlequin, giddy, spins a pirouette,
Dances like a shadow, dark and free,
Spins on his heel, rushes to meet her,
Ignoring the Spaniard momentarily.

The rest is known, but must be played out
Until the last, last note is rung
And Harlequin no longer can carol his tune
But now, in turn, is sung.

He plays, not upon a once guitar, now hollow,
But according to demand is played upon his heart,
The heart whose fragile strings of wire
Proclaim a jovial mockery, a grinning mask
Before the covered fingers move and cry out,
"No, no, it is not thus, we are a thing of art!"

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The Moon

The crescent moon hangs in the tapestry—
This jagged poison scrap of black troll's nail;
The sharpened silver of some tiger's claw—
Hangs in balance, facing heaven half-way.
It is the Arab scimitar with such an edge
That floating hairs divide, and falling feathers
With slightest stroke—a paragon of blades.
With all variety, the colour of
This distant unreach'd earth doth change.
In eventide, the savage horn is white—
A blaze of elemental silver-white—
Even as the Unicorn who stands
Afire in a single shaft of gold.
The eve is old, and new day comes.
The crescent yellows, musty with decay,
Preserving still the deadly brigand blades.
It is the dowager's lace-shawled saffron hair.
The veils hang close to hide the ancient's age.
Grey as a nuthatch wing, the clouds enclose
The sword, now sinking in a depth of blue.

The Clam

The shallow blue-green sea laps fold on fold
Against the pier, all covered by a pale
Beige face of barnacles, with blemishes
Of rough black mussels, like a dread disease.
And showing through beneath the liquid jewel,
Are scallops with their tiered and blood-red gills
And sheet-white tentacles, which undulate
Like blades of kelp to underwater streams.
A giant platyhelminth flaunts the frills
Along its crimson-orange sides, and spots
Of brightest gold upon its back do shine.
And lying on the faded amber sands,
An opened clam, relaxed and basking in
The little sun that reaches finger-rays
Into the depths of life—and rock-filled sea.
The mollusk, seeming to enjoy the light,
Has opened wide its pearl-encrusted valves,
Exposing to the warm salt bath its body—
A small defenseless thing, so delicate.
Its fluted foot, the colour of a flame
Of chemicals—a peachblow porcelain.
Its liver like a patch of mossy green
Beside a cold black pool among the oaks.
Its stomach full and delicately pink,
All coated o'er transparently by pearl.
Its mantle, lying round it to protect,
Is beige and pale with ruffled edge of peach;
And siphon, finely drawn upon with grey,
Like Oriental water-wash and inks.
Along one inner edge, the age-ringed shell
Is boldly splashed upon with Tyrian purple,
Fading wetly toward the upper hinge.
Thus is the clam, and so are many clams,
And other things that live upon this earth.
Unnoticed beauty, thought by man to have
No loveliness, because they are too lowly.

The Hound

I am a gaunt and miserable hound
With liver-colored nose and splotched with brown.
I trot, my shoulders stiff, my body loose
Between them, hanging, swaying with each step.
I try to flee within the walls of my
Imagination, which I thought to be
An endless cavern: some caves dank and reeking
Of the stench of rotting death and foul decay;
Some caverns light and green as spring in chairs
Of Renaissance in Italy, and flowered o'er
In greenish-pink and palest gold-on-white;
Some deep caves brown and red as Rembrandt's men,
And some baroquely innocent as Mozart.
I had a cave with yellow fire-balls
Outlined in splotched and sooty black, and done
Around with vermilion and skyest blue,
And one in gold, brown velvet, marble-walled,
O'ergrown with heavy-hanging vines and trees,
All nature there protected.
At times, as in a moment earlier, I trot
Through all these caves and find them bare,
Dry, desiccated, and uninteresting.
And, trotting like a gaunt and haunted hound,
I, aimlessly, in terror, seek myself,
My purpose, with the aid of brilliant men
Whose lives are monuments in which their work
Lives on, enshrined, whose very being is
A source of constant powerful support.
I find despair, and know not where to turn;
And, turning, I may find a word—a group
Of words; and, in the words, the meaning of
A part of life, of beauty, or of God.
And, turning, I may find myself, a small—
Perhaps a worthless—part of me.
And, having writ, I have another cavern,
One whose periwinkle mountainside is fogged
And smoked by blue of slate, and saffron-white
Of man-made factory. The grey and stark
White clouds glide high above—majestic queens.
And Phaeton's father's chariot whips them
Aside to pour his rays like Moses' horns.
Rococo red-green tree, some leaves the hue
Of clay! The sun behind the forest hill,
Whose trees are thin and black, clad in a veil
Of palest yellow-green and salmon-peach.
Some trees, yet bare, are still to be discovered.
I am a gaunt, life-seeking hound, who trots
Through caverns seen by man, interpreted
In imperfection full of want by me.

Discovery JEANNE PINAULT

There were, in the marble box of stillness,
Snippets of sound. A chain of footsteps
Spilled out of the door; a chair thrust back
Needed its echo to the farthest wall;
A twined and wooly thread of whispered
Monotone coiled on the hiss of papers.
The trouble with quiet is, she thought,
That pins let fall seem so important.
And so to read, perchance to find . . .

There was, in the marble box of stillness,
A Shape that was a Thought, and there
Was she, another amorphous thing
(Not even cousins thrice removed
From two cream hands that held the vessel
Whence came the Thought). Hands held the book
And thus denied their true relation.
A Thought, a luminous whirling chord,
Filled the silent box; She wanted
Then to run from chair to chair,
Crying, *Listen, listen to me!*
Do you know this thing, you know too?
To mount that prim and littered table
And shout, and dance the gleaming aisles
Between the rows of bowed and dreaming
Heads. And hug Minerva, like
A star in some extravaganza
From the movies. But of course
She couldn't. So she closed the vessel
That held the Thought, with two cream hands,
And drunk, and a little numb with it,
Collected her pencils and notebook paper,
Trotted briskly down the corridor
(Stooping for a drink of water),
Leaving a chain of footsteps, fading.

SONNETS

I

It's autumn and again I would recall
The fertile farmland and the idle ploughs,
The copper nuts, the heavy fruits that fall
To the brown grasses from the bending boughs,
The mist of blue that hovers on the hill,
The sudden sting that stiffens up the air
And calls the body back to bear the chill
Of the last wind-whip for the feeble year.
Yet memories, tart with summer, ripen—more
Enticing to the palate of the mind
Than burnished apples golden orchards bore
To brown in winter cellars safe from wind.
Fruitful, that hollow harvest when my heart
Reaped a green love from fields where thistles smart.

JULIAN EARLE GRIFFIN

II

Do you recall that night the melon moon
Slithered its rind across the harvest sky,
When to our ears the steam piano tune
Rose from the sawdust fairway and the cry
Of barkers bickering in each tinsel stall
Crackled their static through the brittle air?
(The lights blazed bright that night.) Do you recall
The pin wheels spinning green and golden glare?
We swung from heaven's highest Ferris wheel,
And from our crescent perch we saw the town
Starlit below . . . My head began to reel
When round the rim we rolled to comet down.
I shivered all electric with alarm
And clutched the hem of heaven in your arm.

TIDE

NANCY McWHORTER

The blanket curled beneath them on the clean
Damp sand extending out and meeting spray
Of surging sea; two separate souls they lay
Like foreign shores with ocean stretched between.
Like herring gulls exploring, probing shoals,
Or skimming surface breakers—searching love,
With groping hands attempting to unglove
The riddle, lay two merging separate souls.
Till eastern skies grew lilac, deepened red,
And morning cracked protective shell of night;
Diminished souls, in glaring, blinding light,
Like haunching sandcrabs, each the other fled.
Tide rose, receded; ocean's empty roar
Left only hollowed shells upon the shore.

Vacation In the Country

"I had wanted to take a boy around Kerrin's age," Mrs. Dobbs said to Mrs. Kelley. "I thought it would be good for him—take him away from his butterflies for a couple of weeks. But Joe said five boys was enough and if we were going to borrow one from the New York slums, it had to be a girl." Her voice was high, and Kerrin, twining his arms around the post in the waiting room, was afraid everyone in the railway station would hear her. He smeared the sticky heat from his upper lip.

"Well, honey, little girls sure is nice," said Mrs. Kelley. "I almost wish we were taking one, instead of a boy. Boys is so rambunctious."

Kerrin twisted around and wished the train would come. Mrs. Dobbs took out the letter again. "I hope we find her all right," she said. "They didn't send us a picture. It just says my Fresh Air Child is Melissa Carter, aged ten. How old is the kid you're taking?"

"Thirteen. Same age as Kerrin. We'll have to get together sometime while he's here."

The train whistle blew, long and clear and sorrowful, and Kerrin ran outside. There were a lot of people standing around; he guessed they were waiting for children too. He was glad his family was taking a girl. That way they couldn't expect him to play with her too much, and probably she wouldn't be bothering him. He guessed girls liked to play with dolls and tea sets and things like that. And two weeks wouldn't be very long, and then she would go away again.

The train had stopped, and clusters of people had gathered at every step. The children all had tags on them, like animals at the fair. Mrs. Kelly ran up to a big, red-haired, freckled boy and hugged him. "Child, I knew the minute I saw you that you was Bobby," she said. He grinned, red-faced.

Kerrin's mother glanced through the crowd, trying not to look like she was staring. Then Kerrin saw the girl standing by herself on the top step of the car. She was kind of skinny. Her dress was faded red and one of her braids had come undone at the end. She was pretty except for her mouth. The corner of it curled down in a thick scar.

"Kerrin," called his mother. "Run up and ask that girl if she's Melissa Carter."

The girl stared at him. "Yes," she finally said. "Who are you?"

In the car, Melissa sank back in the seat. Now they would ask her questions. People always asked questions. On the train she could close her eyes and pretend she had one to sleep and was on Barnaby Island where she was the only real person and all the other people on it were animals who never died. But she guessed she couldn't do that now. Father Pacifico had

said she must be very nice with these people, since they were so good to take her into their home for a vacation in the country.

"Did you have a nice trip, Melissa?" asked Mrs. Dobbs.

"No," said Melissa.

"Poor dear! I know you must be tired. Right after supper I'm going to tuck you into bed. How would you like that?"

"At home I can stay up as late as I want to."

Mrs. Dobbs looked distressed. "Well, honey, I bet you won't need rocking to sleep tonight. Will she, Kerrin?"

Kerrin was hunched up in the corner, trailing his arm out the window and letting it flop back and forth. He was funny looking. He was tall and round shouldered and had a pretty face like a girl's. "Nope," she said.

"Do you have any brothers or sisters, Melissa?" asked Mrs. Dobbs.

"No," she said. "I had a little brother but Jerry got run over. Now there's just Pa and me."

"Oh, how tragic for you, dear," said Mrs. Dobbs. "Oh, I'm so sorry. When I think about my five boys all safe I realize how much I have to thank the Lord for. All my big boys are away from home now; Kerrin's my baby."

"Oh," said Melissa. She was glad that this was the only one. He didn't look too bad. Most boys were mean. The house was big and white and rambling. On the flagstone walk up to the front door there were a lot of fuzzy brown things. She stepped on one, and there was a furry squish under her foot. She stepped on another one.

"Don't!" cried Kerrin. "Mother, she's stepping on all the caterpillars."

"Don't do that, dear," said Mrs. Dobbs. "It makes such a mess."

"I like it," said Melissa.

"Quit it," said Kerrin. When his mother wasn't looking he kicked at her.

"What are they?"

"Caterpillars. They grow up to be beautiful butterflies."

Melissa was surprised. She didn't step on any more. Then they went into the house. It had eleven rooms in it, and everybody slept in a different room. Melissa put her card board suitcase on her bed. The ceilings were high, and outside her window the meadows were quiet and green — like the fields on Barnaby Island. She thought maybe she would like it here.

Mr. Dobbs came in at dinnertime. He was big and bald except for a fringe around his head, and when

he laughed his stomach shook. He put a warm arm around Melissa.

"Honey, we sure are tickled you're here," he said, and his voice boomed. "We kept ordering gals but all we could manage to get was boys. Ma, let's eat."

They had chicken and rice and gravy and beans and biscuits for supper. Kerrin saw Melissa was eating fast. He wasn't hungry.

"Eat up, Kerrin," his father said. "How in the world you expect to get some meat on your bones so you can play football?" He was laughing but his eyes were hard. "Jack and David were hundred-and-thirty-pound halfbacks when they were your age."

I don't care, he thought, and I don't like football. and it's not my fault I wasn't made like David and Jack and Will and Bruce. It's not even my fault I was born. He felt his stomach harden into knots when he looked at the chicken.

"Do you like fried chicken, Melissa?" asked his mother.

"Yes," said Melissa.

"We raised these chickens ourselves," said Mrs. Dobbs proudly. "But I had to get Mrs. Kelley to kill and dress this one for me today. That's one job I just can't do."

"Kerrin should have done that," said Mr. Dobbs angrily.

"Honey, you know as well as I do you couldn't any more get Kerrin to kill a chicken than fly to the moon. He'd as soon drown his butterfly collection."

Kerrin fiercely smeared away a tear that had caught in the corner of his eye. You didn't know I named her Cornelia when she was a chick, he thought, and when I whistled she would come. He got up.

"Kerrin," commanded Mr. Dobbs, "Sit down."

"Really, Kerrin," said his mother, "you are old enough to know how to act in front of your guest. Melissa, what else would you like to eat?"

"Some more biscuits and jelly," Melissa said. She didn't say please.

"After supper," said Mrs. Dobbs, "I want you to see the puppies. Our dog has six darling little puppies three weeks old. Do you like puppies?"

"No," said Melissa.

"Poor thing, I bet in the city you never had a pet," said Mrs. Dobbs.

"Yes," said Melissa. "Once I had a pet ant hill but then they tore it up to make a sidewalk."

Mr. Dobbs laughed so that his stomach shook. "How do you have a pet ant hill, honey?"

"I fed them crumbs." Since they were laughing at her she didn't tell them about the turtle. Jerry had found it in a park. He would crawl all over the room they lived in.

"Finish up your chicken, hon, so we can have our dessert. We have strawberry shortcake," said Mrs. Dobbs.

"I don't want any," she said. It made her stomach ache to think about the turtle. It always hid when

her father came in and once when he was drunk he pried the shell open so hard that it broke. The turtle couldn't walk after that. It was going to die anyway, and she knew it must be hurting so she took him out on the street where a car ran over him. She told Jerry she had taken him back to the park.

"I swear, you and Kerrin are just alike. Strawberry shortcake for dessert and neither of you'll touch it. While we eat ours, Kerrin, why don't you take Melissa out to the barn to see the puppies? I know she can't help but love them."

Kerrin watched Melissa on the way to make sure she didn't step on any more caterpillars. "You got to be nice to my dog, now," he warned.

Spot leaped up to greet him, and then bristled when she saw Melissa. "Easy, girl," he said. "It's just Melissa."

Melissa reached out a hand to pet her. She was soft and pretty. Spot growled and backed away.

"Well," said Kerrin, "I guess we'd better leave. She doesn't like strangers messing with her puppies." He counted them to make sure they were all there and stroked Spot on the head a little longer. He was glad Spot didn't like Melissa.

"Let's go," said Melissa. "I don't like dogs. The puppies are ugly."

"Okay," he said. "Would you like to see my butterfly collection?"

"It doesn't matter," she said.

"Well, come on. I'm supposed to entertain you."

His best ones were in the glass cases in the treehouse, but he sure wasn't going to take her there. He'd show her the ones in his room. They were laid out in rows with printed signs under them telling what kind and family they were. His mother would complain of the hours he spent working on them, but she would sometimes show them off to visitors, and they would exclaim what a brilliant collection he had. His father didn't like that. He thought butterflies were silly.

"What are they for?" asked Melissa.

"Stupid, they aren't for any particular thing. They're just a collection. I like them because they're pretty."

"I think it's dumb," she said.

He sat on the bed. Girls were sure hard to entertain, especially this one. "Do you like books?"

"No."

"I guess you don't like school then. Can you play chess?"

"No. I don't like games." She remembered playing kick the can in the street before Jerry died.

"You don't like anything."

"No," she said. "Things don't like me." Go away, boy, she thought. I don't want you. I want to go to bed so I can be at Barnaby Island again where I am the queen and everybody loves me. "You don't like anything but animals," she said.

That was true, thought Kerrin. It was funny she should have known that. She was a funny girl. Maybe

all girls were like that. He hadn't known any before.

Mrs. Dobbs came bustling up the stairs. "You children having a good time? Melissa, let's get you tucked into bed real early tonight. Kerrin, I want you to do the dishes."

Melissa didn't go to sleep. Usually it was easy to go to sleep thinking about Barnaby Island where all the animals could talk in a special language that nobody but she could understand and all the mother animals named their first girl babies after her. Tonight it was hard to think of Barnaby Island, and she kept thinking the same stories over and over instead of making up new ones.

The next morning after breakfast Kerrin and Melissa went strawberry picking. Mrs. Dobbs kissed them both goodbye. Melissa looked kind of surprised, and Kerrin hated to be kissed in front of people. He was glad, though, that Melissa was here so he had an excuse not to help Pop with docking the lambs' tails. He decided he would try to like her.

On the outskirts of the wood he said, "There's a birdnest in that tree with three eggs in it. Would you like to see it?"

"No," she said. He wished she would like something.

The berries were plump and abundant, and they picked quickly, not saying anything. Once there was a big one that looked so good Kerrin ate it, and when he finished he saw Melissa watching him. She didn't say anything. Her pail looked like it was fuller than his but he figured his was a little bigger around the bottom. She sure could pick fast, though. As they found new patches they got farther and farther apart.

"Look," she called and ran over to meet him. "I found her under the tree." It was a black and white chicken snake, about two feet long, and it squirmed wildly in her hands. She didn't seem to mind it at all.

"Put him down," Kerrin said. "I bet you haven't finished filling your basket."

"I'm going to keep her. I think I'll name her Lucinda." She stroked the snake's back with her red-stained hands, and it didn't squirm so much then.

"You can't keep a snake for a pet. Anyhow you can't name him Lucinda. I bet it's a he."

"I bet it isn't. How do you tell?"

"I'm not saying. Anyway, you've got to finish picking berries."

"My basket's full. Do you want me to help you finish filling yours?"

"If you want to."

Melissa put the snake in the pocket of her jeans and buttoned it closed, and every once in a while she pushed it back down. Kerrin wondered how she could stand it.

At lunch the snake crawled out of her pocket and started up her arm. "This is Lucinda," she said, as though she had just remembered. "I found her this morning."

Mrs. Dobbs shrieked, and Mr. Dobbs roared with

laughter. "Honey, what on earth do you propose to do with that critter?"

"Keep her for a pet."

Mr. Dobbs roared again. "An ant hill and a snake. I never."

Mrs. Dobbs looked very uncomfortable. "Joe, I'm not going to have a snake crawling all over the house."

"Shucks," laughed Mr. Dobbs. "Let her keep it. If she keeps it in a box it won't hurt anything. An ant hill and a snake. Now there's a girl after my own heart."

Kerrin helped Melissa fix up a box for Lucinda. They didn't know what to feed her, but they stuck some leaves and strawberries and pieces of leftover chicken in the box. Melissa stroked her over and over again until the snake lay quiet. "She likes me," she crooned. "She likes me and she doesn't like anybody else. She loves me." She decided that she would let there be snakes like Lucinda on Barnaby Island.

That afternoon they hulled strawberries and helped make jam. After supper Kerrin started working on crosswords and Melissa read some old comic books. If he asked her anything she just said yes or no so finally he stopped trying.

When Mrs. Dobbs went to town the next day she took Melissa. She asked Kerrin if he'd like to go but he finally said he guessed not and she didn't ask him again. It was a funny town, Melissa thought. The streets were wide and the stores were small. In one of the windows she saw a red and white candy striped dress. "That's beautiful," she said.

"Would you like to try it on?" asked Mrs. Dobbs. She looked at it a long time, "Yes," she said. The saleslady made her turn around in the front of the mirror.

"Would you like it?" asked Mrs. Dobbs, smiling. She nodded. It seemed like it cost a lot of maney, but Mrs. Dobbs counted out the dollar bills to the saleslady without saying anything about it.

They went out to the barn to show Mr. Dobbs as soon as they got home. He hugged her and made her twirl the skirt for him. He said again he wished he had a little girl. Kerrin kicked at the stall without saying anything.

"Would you like to have fried chicken on our picnic Sunday?" asked Mrs. Dobbs at breakfast the next morning. Kerrin felt his father's eyes and was silent. Melissa said she liked fried chicken.

"Get Kerrin to kill it for you," said Mr. Dobbs. "I'm tired of his acting like a baby over every damn chicken we kill. It's time he learned how to do a man's job."

"Oh, honey, leave him alone. He'll grow up soon enough."

"No. I'm going outside and see he does it now." Mr. Dobbs rose heavily.

They went out into the chicken yard and Melissa followed them. Mr. Dobbs picked up a chicken by its legs and handed it to Kerrin. The one he had picked

was Brownlee. "All right, strangle it quickly and cut off its head," he said, handing Kerrin the knife.

Kerrin took a vice-like grip and shut his eyes and twisted. The chicken squawed briefly. "Okay, cut off her head."

He laid the chicken against the block and began to saw awkwardly with the knife. A jet of blood spurted out, staining his polo shirt. He turned aside to vomit.

"Baby," said Melissa. "I can do it." She took the knife and finished cuttin off the head.

"I hope you're ashamed of yourself, Kerrin," said Mr. Dobbs.

Lunch was a long and silent meal. Mr. Dobbs asked Melissa how Lucinda was getting along, and she said fine, and a little later Mrs. Dobbs told Kerrin for goodness sakes to sit up straight or he would be a hunchback the rest of his life. After lunch Kerrin took out the garbage and washed the dishes and then he cleaned up the living room. Afterward he went out to the treehouse and rearranged one case of Monarchs.

Melissa wandered around the house and didn't say anything. Finally Mrs. Dobbs asked her if she felt bad.

"No," she said. "I want to go home."

"Poor darling," said Mrs. Dobbs, "I don't wonder you're homesick. Is this the first time you've been away from home?"

"Yes," she said. She didn't know why she had said she wanted to go home, for she didn't. She picked up Lucinda and put her in her pocket and went outside. She was planning to go back to where they had picked strawberries but then she saw the treehouse. It was low and hidden and looked cooled. There were boards nailed across the trunk so that you could climb it. She started up.

"Get away. I hate you!" shouted Kerrin, and she looked up to see him standing over her. "Go away." His voice was thick as though he had been crying.

"I want to come up." When she climbed the next higher board he stepped hard on her fingers. She didn't cry, but pulled her hand out and went up another step. He pulled back.

"What do you want?"

"I want to see the treehouse."

"Well, you can't come. I hate you and so does Spot." He hoped Spot would growl but instead she wagged her tail.

Melissa climbed over the last board and into the treehouse. "Why do you hate me?"

"Because you killed my chicken and you're ugly and my father likes you better than me."

Melissa's face was white and tense. "I didn't kill it; it was you. And it's not my fault I have a scar."

"How did you get it?" He was not angry for a moment, only curious.

"My father hit me with a broken bottle. And I don't care if you don't like me; Lucinda likes me and she doesn't like anybody else. See?" She thrust the snake into his face and the snake hissed. Kerrin pulled

back. "She hates you and everybody else bue me and she loves me. And I don't want to stay in your old treehouse anyhow; all you have is a bunch of butterflies and a dog." She climbed rapidly and he threw bark after her.

Melissa dreamed that night she was on Barnaby Island and all the animals were lying dead with their throats cut and blood spurting out of them. She woke up hot and twisted in the covers, and got up to put Lucinda in bed with her.

They went with the Kelleys for the picnic Sunday. Bobby, the Fresh Air Child that the Kelleys were keeping, did stunts and made faces and the grownups laughed, but Kerrin and Melissa didn't. After they ate and rested they went swimming. Melissa just waded because she didn't know how to swim. It was fun to wade by herself and pretend this was Barnaby Island and talk to all the minnows and the birds. Then Bobby came along and splashed water on her. She didn't like Bobby; she liked even Kerrin better, and was glad when it was time to go home.

The next week went by slowly. She played a lot with Lucinda, and Kerrin spent most of the time in the treehouse except when he had to come in to eat or rest. The puppies got bigger and sometimes when she knew Kerrin was a long way off she went in and watched them. She never touched them.

On Thursday they went to play at the Kelley's farm. "We're going to butcher a pig," said Bobby, proud of his new knowledge. "Usually they wait until the fall but this one got a broken foot so they're gonna kill him now."

"I don't want to go," said Kerrin.

"Kerrin is a sissy," said Melissa to Bobby. "He can't stand the sight of blood." It was the first time Kerrin could remember her saying anything of her own accord.

"I am not," said Kerrin. "And if you think I am I'll go just to show you."

Mr. Dobbs was helping with the butchering. He was surprised to see Kerrin, but he just said, "You kids keep out of the way." They watched from the fence.

Kerrin, his face white and set, did not take his eyes off the pig. His hands bit into the rough board of the fence. He didn't notice Melissa until she slid down. She was white too.

"Look, Melissa is a baby," shouted Bobby.

"I am not," she yelled. "Look at his guts. They're taking them out now." She held the fence with both hands.

Mr. Kelley heard her. "Listen to that blood-thirsty little critter," he shouted to Mr. Dobbs. "They raise 'em tough in New York."

Bobby turned his taunts to Kerrin. "Kerrin is a sissy, Kerrin is a sissy. I'll bet Kerrin wants his Mama now."

Hot anger burned in him, and Kerrin forgot the pig, his father, and Melissa. "You don't dare say that again or I'll fight you." He had never fought.

"Kerrin is a sissy," replied Bobby.

"Come on out behind the barn." Melissa followed them, and watched as they furiously pummeled each other. Blood was trickling down from Kerrin's nose. He screamed and walloped Bobby on the chin. Bobby sat down, hard, and Kerrin landed on top of him, flailing his arms wildly. Bobby began to cry, and Kerrin stopped abruptly. "Am I still a sissy?"

"No." Bobby got up and went into the house. Kerrin watched him, wondering why people liked to fight.

"Your nose is bloody," said Melissa.

"Yes. Are you glad?" said Kerrin.

"No." He looked at her slant wise. She looked like she meant it. "You can come up in my treehouse if you want to."

She thought about it, and remembered him stepping on her fingers. They were still sore. "I don't want to," she said.

"Okay," he said. "If you don't tell my mother about the fight I'll let you play with the puppies."

"I won't tell," she said. "But I don't want to play with the puppies." She went home to play with Lucinda, and he went back to his butterfly collection. He was just as glad she didn't come, but it was kind of lonesome.

Lucinda didn't want to be petted, so Melissa put her back in the box. She wondered why she had not gone to the treehouse. It might have been nice. Maybe she could have taken a puppy up there. She sighed, and tried to think about Barnaby Island, but it wasn't fun any more. She thought about her Father Pacifico. Maybe he would be glad when she came back.

After that she and Kerrin sometimes did things together, and she thought he didn't hate her any more. They washed the dishes together at night, and when he broke one she told his mother it was her because she wouldn't be as mad at Melissa as at Kerrin.

Kerrin thought his father must have heard about the fight, because the day he went to spray in the orchard he took Kerrin with him. It was on Monday, the day before Melissa was to go back to New York. She wandered around the house, lonesome. She would have liked to go with them, but Mr. Dobbs laughed and said he wanted his womenfolks to stay around the house and look pretty. She wandered into the kitchen where Mrs. Dobbs was talking, but it was only on the phone. She went down to the barn. Spot was there, and wagged her tail and licked Melissa's face and hands. The puppies tumbled over her lap. The one she grabbed yelped and Spot growled warningly. Melissa picked another one up and carried them to another stall, but Spot growled again and followed her. If she could tie Spot, Melissa thought, she could play with the puppies as much as she wanted. She put them down, found a bundle of clothes line rope, and looped it around the dog's neck. Spot slashed angrily at her hand. "I hate you, you dog," she screamed, and furiously wound the rope around the dog's

neck and tied her to a stall. Then she picked up the puppy. "Come here, darling, *you* won't hurt me. You love me." She sucked at her hand.

Kerrin, coming back for lunch, found Spot half strangled, still trying to get loose. He cut the rope swiftly, and ran out, ready to beat Bobby into a pulp until he saw Melissa. She was crooning softly to the puppies, and had one of them dressed in a bonnet made out of feedsack.

"Did you tie up my dog?"

"Yes. She bit me." Melissa went on playing with the puppies.

"You almost killed her. I'm going to kill you!"

"You won't. You're a sissy."

He picked her up and threw her out of the barn, and then put the puppies back in their nest.

Melissa didn't say anything during lunch; she went on eating like nothing had happened. She doesn't care at all. Kerrin thought furiously. She doesn't care at all. He went to his room after lunch and picked up a comic and looked at the pictures. If only I could hurt her, he thought. If only I could do something to make her hate me. Then he saw Lucinda, curled up under his desk. He got up, tiptoed out carefully so as not to disturb her, and ran to the toolshed. The hammer was there where it always was, on the second shelf to the right. When he got back Lucinda had not moved. Kneeling, he raised the hammer over the snake's head, paused a moment while revulsion tightened his grip, and struck. The body of the snake uncoiled swiftly and writhed back and forth. Watching the snake, Kerrin sat back on the bed and waited for Melissa to come looking for her.

It was several hours later when Melissa missed Lucinda, and finally she came into Kerrin's room. He was still waiting. "I can't find Lucinda," she said.

"She came in my room and was bothering me," Kerrin said. "I don't like snakes. She's over there." Kerrin pointed to the dark spot under the desk. Melissa ran over and knelt beside it. "For a long time she squirmed, but I guess she ought to be dead by now," Kerrin said.

There was a funny twist around Melissa's mouth, more than just the scar. She didn't say anything. She didn't even cry. She just knelt there, and once she touched the snake.

Cry, thought Kerrin. Cry and shout and spit at me and pull my hair and call me names. The taunts that he had composed stuck in his throat, and he stood there, silent, helpless. Finally he could stand it no longer, and ran until he had no breath, out in the meadow.

"I should have killed you," Melissa said out loud over and over. "If only I had killed you." She stroked her back gently, and a long shudder passed down the snake's body. She took out a handkerchief and started to wrap the mangled head in it, but then she stopped as the acid taste of sweet potatoes and green beans burned in her mouth.

She knew what she was going to do. She ran out to the treehouse, climbed up in it, picked up the glass butterfly cases and dropped them, one by one, to ground. Some of them were not destroyed completely so she climbed down and ripped the wings off all the butterflies. Then she went home to supper.

Kerrin and Mrs. Dobbs took Melissa to the station the next day, for Mr. Dobbs was busy in the barn. Neither Melissa nor Kerrin said anything; they had not looked at each other. Mrs. Dobbs made Melissa promise to write, and told her she'd write her all about the farm. Melissa knew she wouldn't, not after Kerrin went back to the treehouse. Probably they would burn the letters she wrote. I'm not going to be sorry, she thought. I hate them all. She passively allowed Mrs. Dobbs to kiss her goodbye and boarded the train.

"Kids are like that," Mrs. Kelley, who had just seen Bobby off, said. "Work your heart out for them and then they leave and in the excitement of a train ride they don't so much as say thank you."

"I'll kind of miss her," said Mrs. Dobbs. "I doubt if she'll miss us, though. To kids who've lived in the slums all their lives, two weeks in the country doesn't seem to make any difference."

Melissa found an empty seat on the coach. She curled up and tried to pretend she was on Barnaby Island again, but there was nothing there. She couldn't even remember where she had last left off until she

thought about the chicken and remembered her dream. She began to cry silently.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked the lady who was taking care of them on the train. "Do you hate so much to leave?" She sat down beside Melissa and wiped her nose.

"My snake, my snake," she cried. "My snake is dead." But it was not for her snake only that she wept.

Kerrin had gone out into the woods until lunch-time. I'll miss her, he thought, and he was surprised, because he ought to be glad. The treehouse and dog and butterflies were all his now. He decided to go to the treehouse.

A few loose butterfly wings were fluttering around in the leaves. Most of them were crushed under broken glass. Juice oozed out of the broken bodies. He stood there a long time, and he knew then why Melissa had not cried when she saw her snake. Very carefully he stacked up the fragments of glass and the cardboard insets on which the butterflies had been mounted. As he dug around, he found one butterfly, an orange Monarch, which was still perfect. He held it in the palm of his hand, and the wind blew it onto the ground. He didn't feel sick, just the way he felt when he slid down a long winding bannister and found out his legs were too long for it to be fun anymore.

TOD FALK

A Drink of Water

Upstairs in Frankie's room the night light shone dimly from the base socket in the wall, spreading a small glowing bubble on the red carpet beside his bed.

Frankie hugged the old, worn teddy-bear close to him. His tears had made the head soggy and rough.

"Frankie's thirsty," he whimpered. "Frankie wants a drink of water." His head rolled back and forth on the damp, crumpled pillow. Taking the teddy-bear in his hands, he held it up before him. "Hi, Teddy, you thirsty too?" It looked back at Frankie's empty face with a stare equally as vacant. "You're a nice Teddy," Frankie wiped the tears away with the back of his hand.

Quietly the door opened, and Robby, his nurse, flicked on the overhead light. Robby did not have his white coat on this evening. Instead he was wearing the neat, dark grey suit that meant "evening out." He leaned over Frankie's bed, deftly turning the pillow and stroking the boy's hair from his warm forehead.

"Everything okay, fellow? Robby's going out for a little while." He took the plastic tumbler to the bathroom and refilled it from the faucet. "You know," he said, raising Frankie's head to help him

swallow, "there's a party downstairs tonight. You've got to be real quiet up here. Be real good till Robby gets back. Okay, Frankie?" Warily, Frankie nodded his head, his eyelids fell shut in the exhaustion of trying to understand.

"Frankie — be — real — quiet," he murmured.

Robby scanned the room quickly. The windows were locked, the guard rails on the bed firmly in place. Carefully, he folded one of the boy's thin hands around the teddy-bear lest he lose it and wake up crying. There must be no disturbances tonight. Satisfied, he turned off the light and closed the door, holding the knob carefully so that there would be no click to open Frankie's eyes again and set him to wondering, perhaps to crying.

Entering his own room, Robby took his topcoat and scarf from the closet. He checked his appearance before the full-length mirror on the back of the door. Then, whistling softly through his teeth, he ran lightly down the wide staircase.

Mrs. Masterson was in the dining room. As Robby hesitated in the doorway, she turned the centerpiece needlessly and turned it back again. Robby cleared his throat gently, and she looked up.

"Frankie's sleeping like a lamb, Mrs. Masterson," he said. "Is there anything else you'd like me to do?"

"Oh, Robby, no! You do so much as it is." Belle Masterson was concerned. Should she offer him something extra to stay in? Wednesday was always Robby's evening to go out, but of all nights, her husband had chosen this one to entertain his most important client. Will Barrow was too important a man for one to take casually to the club. He was the sort of man one entertained at home with fuss and flowers and the servants at their quiet best.

"No, Robby," she said firmly, her eyes going over the neat, thin greyness of him. "You run along and have your fun. We'll manage, I'm sure, just as long as you're back by ten."

Robby nodded, his glasses shining in the bright light. "I'll be back promptly," he said, and walking quickly through the hall, he let himself out the front door.

Any other evening! Belle said to herself. Frankie's crying can be so disturbing, and I do want everything to go well tonight. She passed through the hall into the living room, hearing the sound of Frank's key in the door as she entered the room. She stopped, poised, arranged her face in a welcoming smile. As the men came in, she turned, both hands gracefully extended.

"Will Barrow, how delightful of you to give us this share of your time." Will bent over her, courteously.

"Charming of you to have me."

"Evening, Belle." Frank kissed the top of her head fondly. "Good day? Frankie all right?"

"Yes, dear, he's sound asleep and Mr. Robinson has promised to return by ten. Do pour us a cocktail, I'm sure we'd all be grateful."

"You mean Robby went out? Tonight?" Frank looked concerned.

"Well, Wednesday is his free night, dear, and Frankie's sound asleep." She turned to answer Will Barrow's look of curiosity. "Mr. Robinson, Robby, has done so much for Frankie, I can't tell you. The exercises he gives him, and he's so sweet and patient about Frankie's eating problems."

"Invaluable, I'm sure," said Will.

"Martini or Manhattan?" interrupted Frank.

"Name your poison!" He laughed too loudly, flourishing a bottle in either hand.

* * * *

Robby, in is old, black Plymouth, drove slowly across the city in the lavender twilight, his small, bespectacled face peering through the windshield. He parked, deftly, in front of his favorite grocery store, a small wooden building with a tattered grey awning blowing over the windows. On the right hand window were letters made of porcelain spelling out the words, DENTICI BROS. In the left hand window was suspended a cord, from which hung large letters of tinselled cardboard advertising SALADA TEA.

"Buon giorno, Mr. Robinson! Como sta?" Mama Dentici hailed him. Robby smiled a gentle greeting to her. He knew just what he wanted for his dinner. A large red onion, two potatoes, some cheese, sausage; he'd have a marvelous casserole. A head of lettuce, olive oil, vinegar, a small bottle of Chianti, still in its wrappings of straw. He counted out the money as Mama Dentici put the groceries in a bag.

"How's your job?" She asked him. "How's the little boy, povero bambino?" She shook her black head. "Rich or poor, we all have our burdens, isn't that so?"

Robby shrugged. "Could go on for years," he said. "It's a swell set-up for me. The butler sets out supper in my room every night; breakfast in bed if I want it. All I have to do is give the kid his exercises and poke his boiled eggs and junket into him." He picked up the paper bag, eager to go, but the old woman laid a hand on his thin arm.

"Tell me doesn't it get under your skin some?"

Robby laughed.

"For that kind of money, Mama Dentici, I'd sell my skin." As he closed the door the little overhead bell tinkled cheerily, and Mama Dentici shook her head back and forth, her gold looped earring picking up the light, making flashing reflections on the worn green counter.

Robby stopped at the third floor landing of the old apartment house to catch his breath. He shifted the bag to his left arm, and trudged up one more flight to find his doorway. He inserted the key, pushed the door in with his knee, and putting the bag on the table, he crossed the room to open the windows wide in order to catch the early autumn breeze and drive out the feeling of emptiness. The sounds of the street were pleasant as they filled the room.

Robby busied himself putting his dinner together.

Finally, when it was in the oven, he poured himself a glass of the wine and stretched out on the old, frayed studio couch, holding in his hand a star-studded pamphlet. Slowly, luxuriously, he lighted a cigarette.

"Beloved friend," he read. "The planet Neptune was strong when you came into the world, and this planet will always play a part in your destiny. By nature you are an analyst and see things from a purely practical standpoint."

Robby nodded, flicked the ash off his cigarette, and read on.

"There is every evidence that during the first week of this month something pleasant will occur. There might be an intrusion of a health matter, which is actually of very small importance——" Robby sipped his wine, reading absorbedly.

* * * *

Belle Masterson looked directly at her husband, raised her eyebrow a bit and inclined her head a fraction of an inch toward Will Barrow, indicating that another brandy was in order. Frank rose in obedience, and picked up Will's glass.

"Freshen it up a bit?"

"Oh, maybe half."

Faintly, there drifted down the stairway a thin cry. Belle glanced nervously at her watch; Robby should be back within the hour.

"Think I should go up?" Frank handed Will a glass and set his own on the mantel.

"Oh, heavens no," Belle said lightly. "Robby's due back any time now, and he's so much better with Frankie than we are." She turned to Will, "Every day of my life I'm grateful for that man!" she said.

"I'm sure that's so," said Will politely. "Children are sometimes a great care."

"But one would not be without them," Belle smiled.

The cry grew into a scream, rising and falling in thin waves, surrounding them.

Frank rose quickly. "Well, old man if we're going to talk business in the morning, you must allow me to drive you to your hotel."

Belle's watch showed five minutes to ten.

"Perhaps Will would like some coffee or another brandy?" Her slight nod toward the clock implied that Robby's return was imminent.

"Thank you, no, nothing." Will was aware of the tension. "I can get a cab," he said.

"Wouldn't hear of it!" Frank was getting their coats from the closet. The wailing now filled the house, trembling over the carefully arranged flowers and the sparkling decanters; penetrating knifelike in its urgency.

"So delighted you came," Belle's hands trembled only perceptibly.

"A wonderful evening. I can't thank you enough." Will shrugged into the coat that Frank was holding for him. "My love to Frankie, of course."

"Of course," murmured Belle.

She closed the door after them, and stood motionless in the big hall. Should I go up, she thought? The big clock began to strike ten.

* * * *

Robby finished washing the few dishes. The inexpensive plastic radio on the coffee table was playing softly, "Vaya Con Dios," when the disk jockey's flat voice broke in. "And now, you good people, fifteen minutes of the latest news. The time is nine forty-five." Quarter of ten! I have to get back on the dot tonight, Robby thought. One quick swipe of the dishcloth over the sink, a hasty emptying of the ash tray into the cluttered fireplace, then he picked up the horoscope, hesitated, started to put it in his inner coat pocket, then changed his mind and slipped it into the drawer of the kitchen table. Robby let himself out quietly, whistling, "Vaya Con Dios."

As he entered the Mastersons' front door, he heard the cries. Belle was standing indecisively at the foot of the stairs.

"Oh, Robby," she cried. "It was simply awful! I should have given you double pay to stay in tonight. I can't imagine what Mr. Barrow must have thought." She brushed her hand through her hair. "They've just left. Oh, how embarrassing!" She was almost in tears.

"Never mind, Mrs. Masterson. I'll see what he wants." Robby ran lightly up the great stairway, shrugging off his coat as he went.

"Robby," her voice followed him. "He probably just wants a drink of water. When you get him quiet, come back down and have a brandy with me, will you? I can't settle down yet."

Robby peered over the railing at her. "Thank you," he said. "I'd love to."



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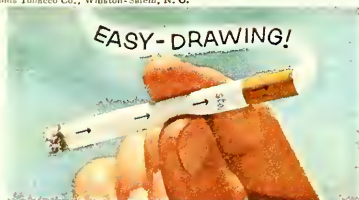
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